

Appendix table 7-7.

Public attentiveness to selected policy issues: 1979–2001
(Percentages)

Issue	1979			1981			1983			1985			1988			1990			1992			1995			1997			1999			2001		
	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP	AP	IP	RP
Local schools	17	21	62	27	19	54	27	20	54	26	22	52	31	20	49	28	23	49	26	25	49	32	25	43	33	25	42	29	25	46	31	28	41
International and foreign policy issues	6	16	78	6	29	65	8	23	70	8	25	67	8	25	67	14	34	52	11	27	62	5	16	79	5	18	77	7	23	70	5	23	72
Issues about new scientific discoveries	7	29	64	9	28	63	9	40	52	8	36	56	8	34	57	8	31	61	7	29	64	7	37	56	11	38	51	8	37	55	7	39	53
The use of new inventions and technologies	6	27	67	8	26	67	8	34	58	8	31	61	7	33	60	7	32	61	6	30	63	6	37	57	9	38	53	7	34	59	6	36	58
Science and technology ^a	9	37	54	12	35	54	13	48	39	12	44	45	11	42	46	11	40	49	10	40	50	10	47	43	14	46	40	12	44	44	10	48	42
Space exploration	—	—	—	7	18	75	7	20	73	9	20	71	8	26	66	6	20	74	5	17	78	5	20	75	8	24	68	6	22	72	5	21	74
New medical discoveries	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	17	51	32	16	56	28	16	52	32	17	49	34	16	53	31	19	52	29	16	52	32	14	51	35
Environmental pollution	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	43	36	18	41	41	12	40	48	12	40	48	10	41	49	10	38	52
Economic issues and business conditions	9	26	65	12	40	48	19	38	43	16	32	52	15	33	52	17	34	50	19	38	44	15	32	53	14	32	54	12	30	58	12	33	55
Agriculture	5	18	77	3	21	76	—	—	—	9	21	70	9	31	60	6	18	76	—	—	—	5	16	79	5	18	77	6	16	78	6	23	71
Military and defense	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	29	57	13	34	53	16	56	28	16	39	45	16	31	53	8	29	63	9	26	65	10	32	58	7	31	62
Sample size (number)	1,635			3,195			1,631			2,005			2,041			2,033			2,001			2,006			2,000			1,882			1,574		

AP = attentive public; IP = interested public; RP = residual public; — = not asked

^aThe attentive public for science and technology combines the attentive public for new scientific discoveries and the attentive public for new inventions and technologies. Any individual who is not attentive to either of those issues but who is a member of the interested public for at least one of those issues is classified as a member of the interested public for science and technology. All other individuals are classified as members of the residual public for science and technology.

NOTES: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding. To be classified as attentive to a given policy area, an individual must indicate that he or she is “very interested” in that issue, is “very well informed” about it and is a regular reader of a daily newspaper or relevant national magazine. Individuals who report that they are “very interested” in an issue but do not think that they are “very well informed” about it are classified as the “interested public.” All other individuals are classified as members of the “residual public” for that issue area. Responses are to the following statements:

–There are a lot of issues in the news, and it is hard to keep up with every area. I’m going to read to you a short list of issues, and for each one—as I read it—I would like you to tell me if you are interested, moderately interested, or not at all interested.

–Now I’d like to go through this list with you again, and for each issue I’d like you to tell me if you are very well informed, moderately well informed, or poorly informed.

–Now let me change the topic slightly and ask you how you get information. First, how often do you read a newspaper: every day, a few times a week, once a week, or less than once a week? Is there any magazine that you read regularly, that is, most of the time? What magazine would that be? Is there another magazine that you read regularly? What magazine would that be?

SOURCE: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics (NSF/SRS), NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, various years.

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